CULVER ACADEMY CONVOCATION

DECEMBER 9, 1991

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FOURTH PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH, CHICAGO

RESPONSIBLE

LET ME BEGIN BY TELLING YOU ABOUT DOMINIC.

WE COULD, OF COURSE, BEGIN WITH THEORY. I COULD READ FROM THE BIBLE, OR THE MAYFLOWER COMPACT, OR THE DECLARATION OF INDEPENDENCE. I COULD READ FROM THE KORAN OR EVEN THE CHARTER OF CULVER ACADEMY AND, IN SOME WAY, DOCUMENT THE NOTION THAT SERVICE TO OTHERS IS VERY CLOSE TO THE HEART OF OUR HUMANITY, THAT HUMAN ORGANIZATIONS AND HUMAN INSTITUTIONS AND HUMAN POLITICAL STRUCTURES BASED ON THAT NOTION ARE ABSOLUTELY ESSENTIAL TO HUMAN LIFE AS WE KNOW IT.

I COULD DO THAT AND PROBABLY WILL SOONER OR LATER, BUT IF I BEGAN WITH IT, YOU WOULD PROBABLY SAY, "HO HUM," AND YAWN AND THANK GOD FOR THE QUIET OF A BORING CONVOCATION IN WHICH TO HAVE A NICE LITTLE NAP.

SO INSTEAD, LET ME TELL YOU ABOUT SOMETHING MUCH MORE INTERESTING - DOMINIC. FOR ME, DOMINIC DEFINES A LOT OF THINGS. I'M OFTEN THINKING ABOUT HIM AS I FALL ASLEEP AT NIGHT. Because he's asleep on my front step

DOMINIC, FOR ALL PRACTICAL PURPOSES, LIVES IN AND AROUND THE FOURTH PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH OF CHICAGO. MOST DAYS HE USES OUR REST ROOMS, OFTEN TIMES STRIPS NAKED AND BATHES, HAS A CUP OF COFFEE OR A SANDWICH. AND AT NIGHT, AFTER TEN OR SO WHEN THE LAST MEETING IS OVER, LIGHTS OUT, AND MY WIFE AND I WHO LIVE ON THE CORNER OF MICHIGAN AVENUE

AND CHESTNUT STREET - ONE OF THE BUSIEST INTERSECTIONS IN AMERICA, START SHUTTING ~~DOWN~~ Down FOR THE NIGHT, DOMINIC BEDS DOWN ON OUR STEPS - OR IN A CORNER, OR UNDER A BUSH.

DOMINIC IS HOMELESS. DEPENDING ON WHO YOU ASK HE IS ONE OF 5,000 - OR PERHAPS 40,000 HOMELESS PEOPLE IN CHICAGO. BUT HOMELESS DOES NOT REALLY DESCRIBE HIM. HE IS SICK. THE PEOPLE AT NORTHWESTERN HOSPITAL WILL TELL YOU THAT DOMINICK IS A PARANOID SCHIZOPHRENIC. HE LIVES IN A VERY DIFFERENT WORLD FROM MOST OF US. HE SEES PEOPLE VERY DIFFERENTLY. NORTHWESTERN HOSPITAL GIVES HIM POWERFUL DRUGS WHICH KEEP HIM STABLE. BUT IF HE DOESN'T GO TO THE OUTPATIENT CLINIC ON THE RIGHT DAY, OR IF HE LOSES HIS PILLS OR FORGETS TO TAKE THEM, HE GETS VERY SICK AND DOESN'T TRUST ANYONE, DOESN'T

REALLY WANT ANYONE CLOSE TO HIM, WON'T GO INSIDE ANY ENCLOSED STRUCTURE BECAUSE NOW HE IS SEEING EVERYTHING CLOSING IN, THREATENING HIM, SUFFOCATING HIM.

So, IT'S NOT THAT THERE ARE NO BEDS FOR DOMINIC. HE'S TOO SICK TO COME INDOORS. HE IS NOT DOING BIZARRE THINGS, SCARING PEOPLE, MAKING FUNNY NOISES. HE IS, THE POLICE WILL TELL YOU, NO APPARENT DANGER TO HIMSELF OR ANYONE ELSE. HE DOESN'T LOOK AWFUL... LITTLE DIRTY, WRAPPED IN A BROWN ARMY BLANKET, BUT THERE ARE PLENTY WORSE. SO THERE ARE NO LEGAL REASONS FOR HOLDING HIM IN A HOSPITAL OR JAIL.

WHAT WILL HAPPEN? ONCE PEOPLE LIKE THAT ARE ON THE STREET, THEY USUALLY DIE IN ABOUT TWO OR THREE YEARS. SO DOMINIC WILL FREEZE TO DEATH ONE OF THESE NIGHTS - OR CATCH A VIRUS WHICH WILL TURN INTO PNEUMONIA AND DIE OF THAT.

WHOSE RESPONSIBILITY IS HE? WHOSE IS CHARGE OF DOMINIC? He's a challenge

AT THE MOMENT - NO ONE - OR IS IT EVERYONE? WHICH MAY BE THE SAME ANSWER ACTUALLY. WHEN EVERYONE IS RESPONSIBLE, NO ONE IS, YOU KNOW.

DO YOU REMEMBER AESOP'S FABLE, "BELLING THE CAT?"

THE MICE LIVED IN A STATE OF PERPETUAL FEAR BECAUSE OF THE CONSTANT MENACE WHICH HOVERED OVER THEIR VERY EXISTENCE. SO THEY HELD A GENERAL MEETING TO DISCUSS WHAT MEASURES THEY MIGHT TAKE TO OUTWIT THE ENEMY, THE CAT.

A YOUNG MOUSE ROSE TO SPEAK:

"YOU WILL ALL AGREE THAT OUR CHIEF DANGER CONSISTS IN THE SLY AND TREACHEROUS MANNER IN WHICH THE ENEMY APPROACHES US. NOW, IF WE COULD RECEIVE SOME SIGNAL OF HER APPROACH, WE COULD

Lewis Thomas, former head of Sloan Kettering author - Lives of a Cell; Way to judge am society is how can't for least if Dominic is our criteria we're not doing so hot - Who's resp is he?

EE Sop

It's not a new topic

EASILY ESCAPE FROM HER. I VENTURE, THEREFORE, TO PROPOSE THAT A SMALL BELL BE PROCURED AND ATTACHED BY A RIBBON AROUND THE NECK OF THE CAT. BY THIS MEANS WE SHOULD ALWAYS KNOW WHEN SHE WAS ABOUT AND COULD EASILY RETIRE WHILE SHE WAS IN THE NEIGHBORHOOD.

"THIS PROPOSAL WAS MET WITH GENERAL APPLAUSE."

WHAT A WONDERFUL IDEA - BRILLIANT - CREATIVE! BUT THERE IS AN UNHAPPY ENDING.

A WISE OLD MOUSE GOT UP AND SAID:

"THAT IS ALL VERY WELL, BUT WHO IS TO BELL THE CAT?"

NOBODY SAID A WORD. NO ONE WAS WILLING TO BE RESPONSIBLE, TO ASSUME THE VERY REAL RISKS INVOLVED IN DOING WHAT NEEDED TO BE DONE.

~~PRESIDENT COPELAND'S POINT, WHICH GOT MY ATTENTION, WAS THAT THE VERY~~

Aesop's fable is not exactly contemporary. The problem of responsibility is not new. What is new is that we/you inherit a world which simply must begin to deal w/ some very major problems.. Rosemary Ruether - all the cumulative problems of last century are reaching crisis stage.. environment, racism, education, poverty, urban deterioration, crime...

and - what else is new is that the very notion of responsibility - for self + community isn't

isn't very fashionable. What became fashionable in the 80's was it's opposite

THE NOTION OF RESPONSIBILITY HAS NOT FARED WELL IN OUR SOCIETY. RATHER, THE "ME DECADE," THE "NEW NARCISSISM," TOLD US WE WERE ENTITLED NOT TO RESPONSIBILITY BUT TO COMFORTABILITY. "DO YOURSELF A FAVOR, TAKE CARE OF YOURSELF, BE YOUR OWN BEST FRIEND, YOU DESERVE A BREAK TODAY" BECAME THE LITANIES BY WHICH WE LIVE, A KIND OF NARCOTIC, COPELAND SAID, THE FLIP SIDE OF WHICH IS "THE POLITICS OF BLAME," I.E., WHATEVER IS GOING WRONG MUST BE SOMEBODY ELSE'S FAULT: BIG GOVERNMENT, BIG BUSINESS, BIG LABOR, BIG EDUCATION. "THEY" ARE MAKING A MESS OF THINGS. IT'S ALL "THEIR" FAULT.

These became the litanies by which we '80's consumers of our own lives. The result of which is that we are irresponsible. Whatever is going wrong is someone else's fault.

INSTEAD OF THE ETHICS OF RESPONSIBILITY, WE ARE MORE AND MORE WILLING TO LIVE BY THE POLITICS OF BLAME, AND WHEN POSSIBLE TO SUE. A TIME COVER ARTICLE LAST SUMMER SUGGESTED THAT WE ARE A NATION OF BLAMERS, AND CITED A RECENT

whiners

VIEWING OF WALT DISNEY'S "FANTASIA" WHICH ATTRACTED A HALF A DOZEN DIFFERENT PROTESTS AND PICKETS, INCLUDING PEOPLE WHO THOUGHT THAT TUTU-CLAD HIPPOS FROLICKING TO THE DANCE OF THE HOURS WERE RIDICULING THE OVERWEIGHT AND FUNDAMENTALIST CHRISTIANS WHO BEWAILED THE DEPICTION OF EVOLUTION IN THE RITE OF SPRING.

TIME EDITORIALIZED THAT "THE VICTIM'S PASSION FOR BLAMING EVERYONE EXCEPT HIMSELF - HAS ABOUT IT THE IMMOBILITY OF ADDICTION," A SENTIMENT ECHOED BY SAM KEEN WRITING ABOUT MEN AND MEN'S TAKING RESPONSIBILITY FOR THEIR OWN LIVES. KEEN SAYS THAT IN OUR ZEAL TO NOT "BLAME THE VICTIM WE HAVE CREATED A SANCTUARY OF VICTIMHOOD INTO WHICH BOTH THE TRULY INNOCENT AND THE TRULY GUILTY CAN RETREAT. . GAMBLERS, DRUG DEALERS, SEXUAL HARASSERS, CHILD ABUS-

It's a serious matter. Philosoph, Sk, wrote a book about + for men - about taking responsibility (Five in R Belly)

ERS...VICTIMS ALL. "IS NO ONE RESPONSIBLE?" HE ASKS. "NO ONE GUILTY? NO ONE TO BLAME? ARE WE FATED TO PLAY PREDESTINED ROLES IN A TECHNO-ECONOMIC SOCIAL SYSTEM THAT IS STUCK ON AUTOMATIC PILOT?" [FIRE IN THE BELLY, P. 205]

THE RESULT IS THAT INDIVIDUALS WANT TO MAINTAIN A SAFE DISTANCE BETWEEN THEMSELVES AND THEIR INSTITUTIONS, AN INTENTIONAL AVOIDANCE OF THE KIND OF PUBLIC RESPONSIBILITY UPON WHICH THOSE INSTITUTIONS ARE ABSOLUTELY DEPENDENT: THE COLLEGE, MUSEUM, SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA, HOSPITAL, CHURCH.

THE EDITOR OF A MAJOR URBAN DAILY NEWSPAPER CALLS IT "THE NEW CYNICISM." AS AMERICA MOPES AND THE ECONOMY FALLS WE BECAME SNIDE AND CYNICAL." ONE WAY TO MEASURE THE SOUL OF A CULTURE IS TO LOOK AT ITS POPULAR ENTERTAINMENT. AND THIS OBSERVER FINDS IT OVERWHELMINGLY

What is happening spiritually the

You were affected as I was by Magic's public acknowledgment of HIV.. and the irony that same week Milt was bragging on TV about having sex w/ 20,000.. Magic said - he contracted it heterosexually - "a matter of numbers". He said also - Be careful - safe sex - that's not enough.. then he said the important part - Be responsible. Sex requires maturity: you need brains as well as hormones. Means you shouldn't do it: means you should think about implications - not just risks to yourself..

PESSIMISTIC AND UGLY, ~~AND WE'RE BOMBING~~ IN "HARD COPY," "UNSOLVED MYSTERIES," GOODFELLAS," WHICH SOME PEOPLE THINK WAS THE BEST MOVIE OF THE last year YEAR, IS ABOUT A MOBSTER WITH NO CONSCIENCE IN A WORLD WITHOUT RULES, WITHOUT PUNISHMENT OR REGRET FOR THE RULE-BREAKERS, AND WITHOUT MUCH HOPE FOR REDEMPTION.

"ROSEANNE," HE SAYS, "CYNICALLY SHOWS THAT WE CAN'T CHANGE THE WORLD, WE CAN ONLY SCOFF." [SEE JEFF JARVIS, IN CONTEXT, APRIL 15, 1991]

WILLIAM RASBERRY WROTE A COLUMN, "WHEN SOCIAL CONSCIENCE GIVES WAY TO DESPAIR," WHICH DESCRIBED A DYNAMIC EVERYONE OF US HAS EXPERIENCED. DISCUSSING HOMELESSNESS AND THE COMPLEX REASONS FOR IT - THE DEINSTITUTIONALIZATION OF THE MENTALLY ILL, THE FACT THAT MENTALLY ILL PERSONS DON'T ALWAYS TAKE THEIR MEDICATIONS ON TIME SO BECOME MORE

MENTALLY ILL, THE FACT THAT GOVERNMENT IS LESS AND LESS WILLING TO PROVIDE SOCIAL SERVICES AND SHELTER, THE FACT THAT THERE IS LITTLE PROFIT IN LOW COST URBAN HOUSING. SAID RASBERRY, "I NO LONGER SEE IT AS A PROBLEM THAT'S LIKELY TO BE SOLVED ANYTIME SOON AND AS A RESULT I FIND IT HARD TO SUSTAIN MUCH INTEREST IN IT. YOU DON'T HAVE TO BE MEAN TO WALK AWAY. ALL IT TAKES IS THE CERTAINTY THAT NOTHING CAN BE DONE." [CHICAGO TRIBUNE, 9/9/91]

THAT'S WHAT WE'RE DOING. WE'RE SIMPLY WALKING AWAY. DID YOU SEE THE PICTURE IN THE PAPER LAST ~~WEEK~~ MONTH OF THE BULLDOZER FLATTENING THE PATHETIC SHACKS OF THE HOMELESS IN NEW YORK? ON THE DAY IT HAPPENED I WAS TALKING ~~TO PEGGY~~ a friend SHRIVER, WHO LIVES AND WORKS IN NEW YORK CITY, WHO SAID ONE OF HER MOST VIVID MEMORIES AND WORST MOMENTS CAME WHEN SHE

WAS VISITING A THIRD WORLD NATION IN AFRICA AND WITNESSED GOVERNMENT BULLDOZERS FLATTENING THE SHACKS OF POOR PEOPLE. SHE SAID SHE SHUDDERED AND WEPT AND THANKED GOD FOR BEING AN AMERICAN, A SOCIETY WHERE SOMETHING LIKE THAT WOULD NEVER HAPPEN. "LOOK AT WHAT WE HAVE BECOME," SHE SAID.

OF COURSE, IT'S COMPLICATED AND TOUGH AND MULTIFACETED. BUT WHAT WE'RE DOING ABOUT IT, AS FAR AS I CAN SEE - AND ABOUT URBAN CRIME, POVERTY, HEALTH CARE, EDUCATION, IS WALKING AWAY. WE CAN'T EVEN DO SOMETHING SO ABSOLUTELY CLEAR AND SIMPLE AS ELIMINATE FROM OUR CITIES, FROM GANGS, FROM THE POSSESSION OF PATHOLOGICAL KILLERS, SEMI-AUTOMATIC ASSAULT WEAPONS WHOSE SOLE PURPOSE IS TO KILL AS MANY PEOPLE AS QUICKLY AND AS EFFICIENTLY AS POSSIBLE. AND WE'LL WALK AWAY FROM IT AGAIN, WON'T WE? IN FACT,

House of Rp. did — th day of
Texas Massacre

Wuthnow - Struggle for - argues 3rd sector
Volunteers - Critical — + in ~~crisis~~ crisis.
Cites decline % who vote

to 18 →

THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES DID THE DAY AFTER THE MASSACRE IN TEXAS.

CHANGE THE WORLD? | WHO ME? | I SUPPOSE THERE AREN'T MANY OF US WHO, DEEP IN OUR HEART OF HEARTS, WOULD NOT LIKE TO, IF NOT CHANGE THE COURSE OF HISTORY, AT LEAST TO MAKE A DIFFERENCE, IN SOME WAY TO CONTRIBUTE SOMETHING TO THE WELL BEING OF THE PLANET AND THE HUMAN ENTERPRISE. | AND I DON'T SUPPOSE THERE ARE MANY OF US WHO HAVE NOT, OVER THE YEARS, COME TO TERMS WITH THE REALITY THAT WE CAN'T DO VERY MUCH. | WE ARE NOT MOTHER TERESA OR | MARTIN LUTHER KING OR JONAS SALK OR ALBERT SCHWEITZER. | WE ARE SIMPLY WHO WE ARE AND IT TAKES MOST OF OUR TIME AND ENERGY AND STRENGTH JUST KEEPING BODY AND SOUL TOGETHER. | AND I DON'T SUPPOSE THERE ARE MANY OF US WHO HAVE NOT DESPAIRED JUST A BIT ABOUT OUR

IMPOTENCE AND IN THAT IMPOTENCE RETREATED FROM A SENSE OF RESPONSIBILITY, CULTIVATED A BIT OF THAT DISTANCE FROM OUR INSTITUTIONS, ("WHAT, AFTER ALL," WE REASON, "CAN I POSSIBLY DO?")

AND IN THAT TINY DYNAMIC, WHICH DOES NOT HAPPEN ONE DAY ONCE-AND-FOR ALL, BUT IS A PROCESS, A SLOW RETREAT OVER THE YEARS, IN THAT SMALL DYNAMIC THERE IS A FATAL MORAL FLAW.

THERE IS A LOT OF EVIDENCE THAT THE REAL HUMAN CRISIS AT THE END OF THE TWENTIETH CENTURY IS A SUDDEN AND REMARKABLY UNIVERSAL ABDICATION OF RESPONSIBILITY.

"THE SIN OF RESPECTABLE PEOPLE," DIETRICH BONHOEFFER SAID, "IS RUNNING FROM RESPONSIBILITY." YOU KNOW BONHOEFFER'S STORY; I'M SURE YOU HAVE HEARD IT MANY TIMES: THE GERMAN PASTOR WHO TOOK A PUBLIC STAND AGAINST NAZIISM,

begin right here

A man whose life + example inspired me - was D.B... who said

DB was a German - scholar, professor + pastor - in 1930's

EVENTUALLY CAST HIS LOT WITH THE RESISTANCE AND JOINED WITH AN ASSASSINATION ATTEMPT AGAINST ADOLPH HITLER, WAS ARRESTED IN 1943 AND EXECUTED IN 1945 JUST BEFORE THE END OF THE WAR. BEFORE HE WAS A MARTYR, BONHOEFFER WAS AN ACADEMICIAN, A DISTINGUISHED SCHOLAR. BEFORE GETTING IN TROUBLE WITH THE NAZIS HE WAS ON THE THEOLOGICAL FACULTY AT THE UNIVERSITY OF BERLIN. HE CAME TO NEW YORK AND UNION FOR A YEAR IN 1933. HIS ACADEMIC SPECIALTY WAS ETHICS.

AND, FOR BONHOEFFER, THE BASIS OF CHRISTIAN ETHICS WAS RESPONSIBILITY. TRADITIONALLY, CHRISTIAN RELIGION HAS FLIRTED WITH THE OLDER, LEGALISTIC NOTION THAT THE BASIS OF ETHICS IS THE AVOIDANCE OF THE EVIL. TRADITIONAL RELIGION EMPHASIZES THE "THOU SHALT NOTS," MUCH MORE THAN "THOU SHALT."

BONHOEFFER, THE ETHICS SCHOLAR,

religion is not authentic unless it encludes

TAUGHT THAT "~~PERSONAL EXPERIENCE OF GOD'S JUDGMENT AND GRACE ALSO INCLUDED~~ CONSCIOUSNESS OF A LARGER HUMANITY TO WHICH WE BELONG. INESCAPABLY, THERE, THE SPIRITUAL LIFE INCLUDES ATTUNEMENT TO AND RESPONSE TO THE SOCIAL REALM." [SEE WEAVINGS, JOHN MOGABGAB, MARCH/APRIL 1990, P. 2-3] TRANSLATE THAT, "RESPONSIBILITY."

BONHOEFFER ~~WAS~~ SAW THE TRAGIC 20TH CENTURY DIVORCE BETWEEN PRIVATE AND PUBLIC MORALITY, PERHAPS BEST, BUT NOT EXCLUSIVELY, ILLUSTRATED BY THE PEOPLE WHO FOUND IT POSSIBLE TO GO TO CHURCH ON SUNDAY MORNING AND ON MONDAY GO TO WORK IN THEIR JOBS IN A CONCENTRATION CAMP WHERE THOUSANDS OF PEOPLE WERE BEING GASSED. ONE OF HIS BIOGRAPHERS PUT IT THIS WAY: "BONEHOEFFER'S FUNDAMENTAL VIEW OF ETHICS WAS THAT A ~~CHRISTIAN~~ man/woman MUST ACCEPT HIS/HER RESPONSIBILITY AS A

CITIZEN OF THIS WORLD WHERE GOD HAS PLACED HIM/HER." [SEE LIFE TOGETHER, JOHN W. DOBERSTEIN, P. 7-13]

BONHOEFFER'S PROPOSAL - THAT MORALITY BEGINS WITH RESPONSIBLE CITIZENSHIP - IS, I WOULD PROPOSE, TERRIBLY IMPORTANT TODAY, MORE SO THAN IT WAS FIFTY YEARS AGO.

THE PROVOCATIVE FUTURIST, JEREMY RIFKIN, THINKS THAT THE FUTURE OF THE HUMAN RACE DEPENDS ON A "FUNDAMENTAL SHIFT IN HUMANITY'S FRAME OF REFERENCE.. A NEW SET OF GOVERNING PRINCIPLES FOR HOW HUMAN BEINGS BEHAVE AND ACT IN THE WORLD." WE MUST, IN ORDER TO SURVIVE, RIFKIN PROPOSES, REPLACE THE NOTION OF USING, CONSUMING, OWNING, AND DISCARDING WITH NOTIONS OF CONSERVING, PROTECTING, NURTURING, AND SHARING. AND THE WORD RIFKIN CHOOSES FOR THIS RADICAL SHIFT IN THE WAY WE THINK

AND BEHAVE IS, CURIOUSLY, STEWARDSHIP, RESPONSIBLE MANAGEMENT. [EMERGING ORDER, P. 270 - IN HALL, P. 240]

PRINCETON SOCIOLOGIST ROBERT WUTHNOW, IN THE STRUGGLE FOR AMERICA'S SOUL, OBSERVES THE STEADY DECLINE IN THE PERCENTAGE OF THE POPULATION THAT VOTES AND THAT IN SOME LOCAL ELECTIONS ONLY FIVE PER CENT OF THE ELIGIBLE VOTERS ARE GOING TO THE POLLS.

ROBERT BELLAH'S NEW BOOK, THE GOOD SOCIETY, TRACES OUR DETERIORATION AND REFUSAL TO BE RESPONSIBLE. AMERICA IS EXPERIENCING A MASSIVE FAILURE OF CIVIC COURAGE, HE SAYS. VOTERS REBEL AGAINST TAXES NECESSARY FOR SUSTAINING PUBLIC SERVICES. POLITICIANS ENCOURAGE THE REBELLION. THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT SHIFTS RESPONSIBILITY DOWN TO THE STATES. STATES DEPEND ON LOTTERIES AND CASINO GAMBLING SCHEMES TO BALANCE THE

Bud't

+ hand it down to citizs —

new familiar phenom is fiction

the public spending must be cut

because there is no money. There is plenty

of money — we are simply not willing

to spend it. — back to 13

BUDGET AND HAND IT ON DOWN TO THE CITIES WHICH ARE CHRONICALLY BROKE. ONE OF THE MOST FAMILIAR POLITICAL PHENOMENA IS THE FICTION THAT PUBLIC SPENDING MUST BE SLASHED BECAUSE THERE IS NO MONEY. THERE IS, OF COURSE, PLENTY OF MONEY. WE SIMPLY ARE NOT WILLING TO USE IT, TO BE RESPONSIBLE ABOUT THE LIFE OF OUR NATION. WE HAVE BECOME SOMEONE WROTE, RECENTLY, "CONSUMERS OF OUR OWN LIVES."

IT IS THE NATURE OF THE TOPIC TO BE DIFFICULT AND CONTROVERSIAL. "BELLING THE CAT" IS VERY RISKY BUSINESS.

DO YOU RECALL READING ABOUT THE FORTY-SEVEN YEAR-OLD RUSSIAN GEOLOGY TEACHER WHO JOINED THE YOUNGER PEOPLE ON THE BARRICADES DURING THE COUP ATTEMPT? HE HELPED BUILD THEM - PILES OF TRASH, SOFAS, PIPE, LUMBER AND THEN HE CLIMBED UP ON THEM DEFYING THE SOVIET TANKS WHICH WERE CLOSING IN ON THE RUSSIAN

PARLIAMENT BUILDING. A REPORTER, AFTER IT WAS OVER, ASKED HIM WHY HE HAD DONE THAT, PUT HIS LIFE ON THE LINE, STARING DOWN THE BARREL OF A TANK CANON.

HE SAID, "A MAN SOONER OR LATER HAS TO DECIDE WHO HE IS. I DECIDED WHO I WAS A LONG TIME AGO, BUT JUST NOW HAD THE CHANCE TO SHOW IT."

AND IT WAS AN EQUALLY MOVING MOMENT LAST YEAR WHEN VACLAV HAVEL, new PRESIDENT OF CZECHOSLOVAKIA, ADDRESSED THE UNITED STATES CONGRESS. HE SAID:

"THE SALVATION OF THIS HUMAN WORLD LIES NOWHERE ELSE THAN IN THE HUMAN HEART...IN HUMAN RESPONSIBILITY. . THE ONLY BACKBONE TO OUR ACTIONS, IF THEY ARE TO BE MORAL - IS RESPONSIBILITY. RESPONSIBILITY TO SOMETHING HIGHER THAN MY FAMILY, MY FIRM, MY COUNTRY, MY SUCCESS - RESPONSIBILITY TO THE ORDER OF BEING WHERE ALL OUR ACTIONS ARE

INDELIBLY RECORDED AND WHERE AND ONLY WHERE THEY WILL BE PROPERLY JUDGED."

[SEE "BELLING THE CAT," HENRY COPELAND, THE WOOSTER REVIEW]

SO THE MATTER RESTS FINALLY - ON YOUR LAP - OR MINE - OR IN OUR HEARTS.

I BELIEVE WE HAVE BEEN PUT HERE FOR A PURPOSE. I BELIEVE YOUR LIFE HAS A PURPOSE. YOU MAY NOT BELIEVE IT. YOU MAY NOT BELIEVE THERE IS ANYONE OUT THERE TO BE THE AUTHOR OF NOTIONS LIKE PURPOSE.

IF YOU SHARE MY BELIEF, I CHALLENGE YOU TO FOLLOW IT - TO UNDERSTAND YOUR LIFE AS GOD'S MOST RECENT EFFORT TO IMPROVE THE PLACE - TO MAKE A BETTER WORLD -

AND, IF YOU DON'T SHARE MY BELIEF IN A DIVINE PURPOSE GIVEN, I CHALLENGE YOU ANYWAY, FOR A WHOLE DIFFERENT SET OF REASONS, AMONG THEM THE SIMPLE SURVIVAL

X

I wonder dwt you - ? 21 what I would have dun in Germ in 30's - could I have dun wt B. did - ? or Terry Anderson - ? pray God - we will not have t find out - But I do have t deal wl Daniel t t c myriad of challenges like hm - all q which demand my energy, imagnst, love + passion X

OF OUR SYSTEM OF GOVERNMENT AND WAY OF LIFE AND INDEED, NOT TO BE MELODRAMATIC, BUT THE SURVIVAL OF ALL OF US. I CHALLENGE YOU TO BE CARE GIVERS - TO BE RESPONSIBLE FOR OTHERS, BY BEING RESPONSIBLE FOR YOURSELF.

IT IS - I BELIEVE, OUR BURDEN. IT IS ALSO OUR GLORY.

for your community here -
for the larger community -
+ to begin by being responsible for yourself.